



Carmelo (Menu) Rapa

1919 - 2010

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Carmelo Rapa, a highly respected figure well known for his contribution in the educational sector, his involvement in the development of Ghajnsielem F.C. and his dedication as a bandsman with St Joseph Band passed away on Tuesday 28th September 2010 at the age of 91 survived by his wife Carmela, his sons Joe, Silvio, Renato and Alfio,

his daughters Maria, Yvonne, Lina, Monica, Frances and Deborah, sister M'Assunta, nieces, nephews and grandchildren.

Carmelo was born in Ghajnsielem on the 18th of June 1919, son of Ġuzeppi Rapa and Ġuzeppa nee' Buttigieg. He took his primary education in Ghajnsielem and continued his studies at the Sacred Heart Seminary in Victoria. As the World War 2 started to loom, Carmelo was forced to enlist in the Army and he served as a sergeant until the war ended. At the end of the second World War, Carmelo joined the Education Department as a teacher at St. Anthony's College and later at the Ghajnsielem Primary School where he also coached numerous football teams, several of them to league championships, and more importantly, innumerable future Blacks. He spent the rest of his career in Ghajnsielem before eventually retiring.

Carmelo was a staunch Feast enthusiast. In fact he is one of the pioneers who created the external street decorations for the Feast of Our Lady of Loreto. He joined the St Joseph Band before the World War 2 and was again part the Society when it resurrected again in 1966. It is also worth mentioning that before the World War 2, Carmelo was also one of the first members of the Sea Scouts and Ghajnsielem's Boys Scouts.

Carmelo Rapa is also associated with the development of the Ghajnsielem Football Club in the 50's and 60'. In fact, Rapa had become deeply involved in the affairs of the Club and it is safe to say that among the many other matters he handled, one could include that of team coach. This probably was the case for the rest of the 50's. It is interesting to note that after a period of time during which Ghajnsielem played in a blue and white outfit. The Club had been inactive for some time, and when it was brought back to life there

was no team gear to speak of. After much deliberation, Carmelo Rapa noted that all the players must have a black shirt, as part of the dress code for sombre occasions. So black was adopted as the new team colour. To this very day our team is habitually referred to as the Blacks and black and white have been our colours ever since. At the end of the 1964/65 season, Ghajnsielem were relegated once again. Carmelo Rapa was back in charge and led the team back to the First Division, to an Independence Cup triumph in 1965/66 and to a Galea's Cup win in 1966/67. Carmelo Rapa's involvement with the Club continued until the early seventies where he occupied the position of Secretary. Carmelo was also involved in the coaching of the Ghajnsielem primary school team in the sixties and seventies.

Carmelo Rapa's involvement with football and Ghajnsielem goes back to the time when there was no organized football in Gozo. He used to watch and play football as a young kid at Fort Chambray. Born June 18, 1919 Carmelo was too young to make the team that played for the Zammit Cup on May 21, 1936. Still short of his seventeenth birthday, however, Carmelo nearly played in that match but one of the senior players talked Carmelo Mallia out of fielding him on account of young Carmelo's size and age compared to that of the rest of the team and the opponents. Carmelo stayed involved in a secretarial role with the Club throughout the early years of its existence. Football was organized intermittently in Gozo and Ghajnsielem did not always manage to participate in organized competition. By the time the Club returned to competition in 1952/53, Carmelo Rapa had become deeply involved in the affairs of the Club and it is safe to say that among the many other matters he handled, one could include that of team coach. This probably was the case for the rest of the 50's, when





the Club's senior team earned their famous moniker: the Blacks.

In the early sixties the Club was relegated and after solving some internal problems returned to competition in 1963/64. Carmelo occupied the role of Club secretary at the time and celebrated with coach Mr. Michael Bugeja, fellow committee members and players a brilliant campaign that led to the second division championship and promotion. At the end of the 1964/65 season, Ghajnsielem were relegated for the second time in three years. Carmelo Rapa was back in charge and led the team back to the First Division, to an Independence Cup triumph in 1965/66 and to a Galea's Cup win in 1966/67.



Carmelo Rapa's involvement with the Club continued until the early seventies. He was Club secretary in the 1967/68 and 1968/69 seasons during which the Club came close to winning the first championship in its history. Rapa, and his colleagues president Mr. Francis Grech, treasurer Mr. George Attard and coach Mr. Peter Caruana did not lose their nerve. They stuck together, kept faith in the young players that came so close to the championship, and finally, in the spring of 1970 accomplished that which Ghajnsielem had been waiting for so long to achieve: the Blacks became champions of Gozo for the first time in their history. Mr. Rapa made sure that this historic event be properly commemorated and issued a celebratory publication

Ghajnsielem F.C. Champions - Semper Firmum. This was the precursor of the Black & White magazine that played such a crucial part in creating a winning culture within the Club. Mr. Rapa's long and distinguished involvement in one official capacity or another within the Club came to an end the following season, but the discipline and organization which he brought into the Club's administration remained after him, with the baton handed over to his son Joe, who took over as secretary while he was still active as the Blacks' right full-back and saw that the Blacks stayed on course long enough to win a record five league championships in a row.

Carmelo's love for Ghajnsielem was unconditional and of the enduring kind. It expired only today, the 28th day of September 2010.

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